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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 BAKU 000380

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [KNNP](#) [IAEA](#) [PARM](#) [MNUC](#) [AORC](#) [UNSC](#) [IR](#) [AJ](#)
SUBJECT: RUSSIA REPORTEDLY SEEKS APPROVAL TO TRANSIT
BUSHEHR EQUIPMENT THROUGH AZERBAIJAN

REF: A. STATE 29464

[1B.](#) BAKU 373

Classified By: DCM Donald Lu per 1.4 (b,d).

[11.](#) (U) This is an action request; please see para 9.

[12.](#) (S) Summary: An Azerbaijani MFA officer informed us that the Azerbaijani Government has received repeated requests from the Russian Government to allow the transit of unspecified equipment to Iran's light water reactor at Bushehr. The Russian Government has not provided details of the proposed transit. The MFA officer said he was informing us of the transit request with approval from "high levels" of the MFA, but that the MFA did not, at this point, seek any assistance from the U.S. on this issue. The MFA is concerned that the shipment could violate dual-use provisions of UNSCR 1803 and could escalate into a political issue. The MFA official said that if the Russian Government provided additional details regarding the shipment, the Azerbaijani MFA may seek guidance from the U.S. regarding the applicability of the UNSCRs. The Department's guidance regarding the applicability of UNSCRs 1737, 1747 and 1803 is requested. End summary.

[13.](#) (S) Azerbaijani Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Security Affairs Department Officer Hikmet Hajiyev informed us on April 18 that Azerbaijan has received repeated requests from the Russian Government seeking approval to transit unspecified equipment to Iran's Bushehr light water reactor. Hajiyev said this was a very sensitive matter and asked that it not be discussed over the telephone. Hajiyev said that he had the approval of "high levels" of the MFA to discuss the matter with Emboffs and to officially inform the USG of this situation. Hajiyev added that he did not want to over exaggerate the situation, and that that Azerbaijan was not asking anything from the U.S. at this time.

[14.](#) (S) In October 2007, Russian Ambassador to Azerbaijan Vasiliy Istratov reportedly first raised this issue with Azerbaijani First Deputy Prime Minister Yaqqub Eyyubov. According to Hajiyev, Istratov informed Eyyubov that Russia would request Azerbaijan to allow the transit of a shipment of unspecified equipment for the Iranian light water reactor at Bushehr to be allowed to transit from Russia to Iran via Azerbaijan. In early January 2008, the Russian Embassy in Baku made a formal request, via diplomatic note to the Azerbaijani MFA, requesting that a shipment be allowed. According to Hajiyev, there were no details in the note as to what the shipment would contain, where it would transit, or what form it would take. The diplomatic note did state that the equipment was for the light water reactor in Bushier. The MFA informed the Cabinet of Ministers, which is

responsible for coordinating Iran Sanctions issues.

¶15. (S) According to Hajiyev, the Azerbaijani MFA did not know how to respond to the request, and did not know if the potential shipment would be in violation of UNSCR 1737 or 1747 (UNSCR 1803 had not yet been passed at that time). Azerbaijan initially planned to raise the issue discreetly with the IAEA in Vienna. However, upon further consideration, and the fact that the IAEA is, in Hajiyev's words "full of Russians and Iranians" and hence word would likely quickly get back to one or both countries, Azerbaijan decided against raising the issue with at the IAEA, discreetly or otherwise.

¶16. (S) The MFA received another diplomatic note at the end of February or early March, marked "urgent" and referring to the original diplomatic note from January. The second diplomatic note did not provide any clarification and simply asked that the previous request be approved. The MFA responded to the Russian Embassy via diplomatic note during the first week of April 2008, asking that Russia provide exact technical details regarding the shipment. Hajiev said the Azerbaijani MFA first wanted to determine if anything in the shipment would be in violation of any UNSCRs, and second, given the nature of the shipment, if there could be a potential threat to public safety. As of April 18, Azerbaijan had not heard back from the Russia.

¶17. (S) Hajiyev said the issue was quickly becoming a political one and that Azerbaijan had to determine what its responsibilities were under the UNSCRs. He also noted that it was important for Azerbaijan to "coordinate" this with the United States, so it would not harm bilateral relations between the U.S. and Azerbaijan. Hajiyev noted that Russia had not provided any details regarding the proposed shipment,

BAKU 00000380 002 OF 002

and that Azerbaijan did not even know if Russia wanted to transit Azerbaijan's land, sea or air borders. Hajiyev said the Cabinet of Ministers has the ultimate approval in such matters and that the MFA was responsible for providing a "political explanation" if necessary.

¶18. (S) Hajiyev said that Azerbaijan wanted to inform the U.S. as a "strategic partner." He added that Azerbaijan was not asking for anything from the U.S. at this time, but that when and if the Russian side clarified the shipment, Azerbaijan may seek clarification as to whether the equipment would be permissible under the Iran-specific UNSCRs. Poloff noted that per ref a guidance, the U.S. would most certainly advise that the transit not be allowed due to our concerns regarding dual-use. Hajiyev said that he understood this, but that Azerbaijan would need some "concrete legal/political" justification to refuse the shipment, should the equipment be allowable under the UNSCRs, as a refusal could harm Azerbaijan's economic interests when wanting to transit goods through Russia, specifically noting the Volgoa-Don canal, and that the Russians frequently were difficult to deal with in this area.

¶19. (S) Comment and Action Request: In discussions regarding the Proliferation Security Initiative, the GOAJ has repeatedly stated that it does not want to be placed in the position of having to publicly take action regarding suspect shipments between Iran and Russia. During an April 10 meeting with the Ambassador, Deputy Foreign Minister Azimov hinted that Azerbaijan could be facing precisely this sort of situation (ref b). The Foreign Ministry is asking for quiet USG assistance to assemble the legal arguments to reject the shipment. The Embassy seeks the Department's guidance as soon as possible on the applicability of UNSCRs 1737, 1747 and 1803 to this situation.

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